

Assassinologists in Boston

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BOSTON—Last week, some 1,000 people attended a conference on political assassinations at Boston University. Organized by a group of young political activists under the aegis of the Assassination Information Bureau, the conference considered all of the murders of American political figures of the last dozen years, but the focus of the three-day meeting and its recurring theme was, "Who killed JFK?" This would not be remarkable but for the obvious fact that few of the sponsors or audience could have been more than 12 years old on November 22, 1963.

Mark Lane, the doyen of assassination researchers, gave the keynote address. He said that most of the questions raised during the past decade regarding the official account of the Dallas assassination remained unanswered, and he noted that a new generation of skeptics had come on the scene to demand the facts.

Interest also focused on the murders of Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr., stimulated in part by current efforts to reopen those cases. Theodore Charach, an investigative journalist and filmmaker who produced *The Second Gun*, a documentary on the RFK assassination, discussed the recently published evidence that Robert Kennedy's fatal shot was fired by someone other than Sirhan Sirhan. Wayne Chastain, a lawyer and journalist, told of James Earl Ray's efforts to obtain a new trial (a decision is expected this month).

The most sensational feature of the conference, however, was a new print of the motion picture taken by the late Abraham Zapruder, a Dallas businessman, showing the assassination of President Kennedy. The Zapruder film, an eight-millimeter, color home movie, has been a major source of the controversy over the number and direction of assassination shots that were fired in Dallas. The film was purchased by Life Magazine, which made a print available to the Warren Commission, and stills from the film have circulated among private assas-

sination researchers for years, but the film rarely has been shown in public.

The print shown at the Boston conference was of much sharper quality than any of the earlier bootleg copies. Robert Groden, a young filmmaker, obtained a print by undisclosed means and put it together with other footage of the presidential motorcade to create a comprehensive motion-picture account of the President's ride from Love Field to Dealey Plaza where the shots were fired. Through optical printing techniques, Groden has managed to zoom in on the figure of the President in the back of the limousine during the critical six seconds in which the bullets struck. The result is a scene of real horror, and the most graphic contradiction of the official claim that the final shot struck Kennedy from behind.

The JFK Assassination:

The new Zapruder film

The film was shown repeatedly to standing-room-only crowds at the conference. On at least one occasion, the film was stopped while a member of the audience who had fainted could be carried from the auditorium.

The conference differed from similar earlier meetings on political assassinations—relatively little emphasis was placed on proving conspiracy in any of the killings. The unspoken assumption of both speakers and audience seemed to be that conspiracy had already been pretty well proved, especially in the JFK case, and that the important question now is what to do about it. The focus of the meeting was not evidence but politics.

The Assassination Information Bureau is the creation of five young Boston-area activists, some of whom were active in the anti-war movement of the '60s and early '70s. Carl Oglesby may be the best-known movement personality among the AIB's founders. Bob Katz, Dave Williams, Harvey Yazjian and

Michael Lee are the other members. The point the AIB is trying to make was stated in the conference program:

...domestic assassinations and other related political events reflect a governing power structure that is no longer responsive to its constituency. The AIB encourages the development of a political consciousness around the issue of assassinations and other official efforts to suppress the truth in each case.

The AIB plans to hold other conferences in the near future and to publish a newsletter. (Anyone wishing to be put on the AIB mailing list can write to the Assassination Information Bureau, 63 Inman St., Cambridge, Mass. 02139). Its primary task now, its members say, is "to organize a community of concerned citizens to act upon these issues."

One conference speaker pointed out that the outcome of the last three presidential campaigns has been influenced, directly or otherwise, by assassinations and attempted

assassinations. Are the doubts and questions about these killings relevant political issues for the contemporary Left? Most of those attending the Boston conference seemed to think so, including Dick Gregory, who spoke at a Saturday-night panel on the theme "Who Done It?"

Donald Freed, co-author of the book and film *Executive Action*, a dramatization of the JFK assassination, seems to think so too. "There is something about all this," he said, pointing to the young audience jammed into Morse Auditorium, "that is very reminiscent of Berkeley in 1964."

If the Boston turnout is any indication of things to come on campus, the Assassination Information Bureau may be well on its way to achieving at least one of its goals. As one member put it, "We're going to demand answers. Anyone running for public office is simply going to have to deal with these issues. We're going to see that the 1976 political agenda includes the questions, 'Who killed JFK?' and